

Fruit of the Month

Figs

Figs, one of mankind's oldest fruits, is only now receiving its due attention in homes across the U.S. Although considered a fruit, the fig is actually a flower inverted into itself. They are the only fruit to ripen on the tree. Originally native from Turkey to northern India, the fig fruit spread to many of the Mediterranean countries. The primary producers of dried figs today are the United States, Turkey, Greece, and Spain. This highly nutritious fruit arrived in the United States by Spanish missionaries settling in Southern California in 1759. Fig trees were soon planted throughout the state.

One serving of figs is 40 grams, about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, or about 3 Calimyrna figs or about 4 to 5 Mission figs. Figs are high in fiber, providing 20% of the Daily Value --- more dietary fiber per serving than any other common dried or fresh fruit.



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (40g)

Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 30 **Calories from Fat 0**

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g **0%**

Saturated Fat 0g **0%**

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 0mg **0%**

Total Carbohydrate 7g **2%**

Dietary Fiber 1g **4%**

Sugars 3g

Protein 0g

Vitamin A 2% • Vitamin C 2%

Calcium 2% • Iron 0%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

		Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than		65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than		20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than		300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than		2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate			300g	375g
Dietary Fiber			25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4



There are hundreds of fig varieties but the following are most the commonly found in today's markets.

The Calimyrna Fig - Is known for its nut-like flavor and golden skin. This type is commonly eaten by hand as is.

The Mission Fig - Was named for the mission fathers who planted the fruit along the California coast. This fig is a deep purple which darkens to a rich black when dried.



The Kadota Fig - Is the American version of the original Italian Dattato fig, that is thick-skinned with a creamy amber color when ripe. Practically seedless, this fig is often canned and dried.

The Brown Turkey Fig - has copper-colored skin, often with hints of purple, and white flesh that shades to pink in the center. This variety is used exclusively for the fresh fig market.



Fig varieties and photos courtesy of the California Fig Advisory Board

Availability

Fresh figs are available July through September. Dried figs are never out of season, and are available all year. You can find them in your favorite grocery store in the produce or dried fruit section.

Selection

Look for figs that are soft and smell sweet. Handle carefully because their fragile skins bruise easily.

Storage

Store fully ripened figs in the refrigerator up to 2 days; bring to room temperature before serving.

Using dried figs as a fat replacer in your recipes

Dried figs are excellent fat replacers in baked goods. Just remember when using dried figs to replace shortening or oil in baking do not overmix or overbake. Use only half of the normal amount of shortening, margarine, butter or oil, in a recipe when using dried puree. For instance, if 1 cup of margarine is called for, use only $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Then use $\frac{1}{2}$ of the fig puree. Here's a simple fig puree recipe to include in your baking recipes.

Fig Puree

Makes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups

2 cups dried figs
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
2 tsp vanilla

Puree figs, water and vanilla in blender or food processor. Use as directed.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 178, Protein 2g, Fat 1g, Calories From Fat 4%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 44g, Fiber 9g, Sodium 9mg.

Make Figs Part of your 5 to 9 A Day Plan



- Take some figs in a plastic bag to the office, to school, to the game or park, for a quick snack. It's easy to eat and satisfies a sweet tooth.
- Keep a container of figs in a desk drawer at work, to get rid of late afternoon munchies, or to include during your coffee break.
- Slice a few figs and add to your tossed green salads. They add delightful sweetness and texture, as well as fiber.
- Serve up mashed or cubed winter squash or sweet potatoes with some chopped figs. The figs are rich on their own, so skip the butter or margarine.
- Use fig puree as a fat substitute in recipes.

- Blend low-fat cream cheese, ricotta cheese, or cottage cheese with some fruit to create a great spread for toast or bagels, or as a dip for sliced fresh fruit.
- Chop some California figs to scatter over instant or regular oatmeal or any cold cereal. Enjoy the fig flavor and crunch to your morning meal.

Tips courtesy of California Fig Advisory Board

Recipes

Thai Chicken Salad with Figs

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

Source: California Fig Advisory Board

6 Tbsps fresh lime juice

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey

3 tsp light soy sauce

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp red pepper flakes, crushed

2 tsp fresh gingerroot, very finely minced

2 cups shredded, cooked chicken

1 cup fresh figs, stems removed, and cut lengthwise into eighths

2 green onions, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh mint

$\frac{1}{2}$ (2 cups) small cantaloupe; seeded, pared and cut in julienne strips

1 ($1\frac{1}{2}$ cups) sweet, red pepper; ribs and seeds removed, cut in julienne strips

1 (2 cups) small cucumber; peeled, seeded, and cut in julienne strips

Assorted mixed salad greens.

Mint sprigs for garnish

Combine lime juice, honey, soy sauce, pepper flakes and gingerroot in medium bowl; mix well. Add chicken, figs, onions and mint; toss to coat evenly. Cover and refrigerate for one hour. Stir occasionally.

When ready to serve, combine cantaloupe, pepper strips and cucumber with marinated chicken and toss gently but thoroughly. Line serving bowl or salad plates with greens and arrange mixture in center. Garnish with mint sprigs if desired.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 326, Protein 27g, Fat 7g, Calories From Fat 18%, Cholesterol 98mg, Carbohydrates 45g, Fiber 8g, Sodium 460mg.

Ricotta Figs

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Chef Ida Rodriguez for Melissa's Variety Produce

12 ripe fresh figs

1 cup fat free ricotta cheese

6 Tbsps honey

1 tsp lemon peels, grated

1 tsp orange peels, grated

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp vanilla

2 Tbsps pistachio nuts

Remove stem ends from figs and cut each in half lengthwise. Combine ricotta, honey, lemon peel, orange peel, and vanilla in a small bowl until well blended. Serve figs with ricotta mixture. Garnish with chopped nuts.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 292, Protein 7g, Fat 2g, Calories From Fat 6%, Cholesterol 10mg, Carbohydrates 60mg, Fiber 5g, Sodium 66mg.

Fig Pizza

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Wegman's

1 pkg (16 oz) dried figs, stemmed, halved

Nonstick spray

4 (6-inch) flour tortillas

1/8 lb prosciutto ham

4 oz Gorgonzola cheese

1 Tbsp fresh chives, chopped

Preheat oven on 350 degrees.

Place figs in saucepan with 1 cup water on medium heat; cover. Simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat; rest 15 minutes. Puree 1-2 minutes in blender or food processor.

Spray medium skillet with nonstick spray. Heat on medium to high; toast one tortilla at a time, pressing to toast evenly.

Spread 2 Tbsp fig puree over toasted tortillas; top each with 1 slice prosciutto and 1½ Tbsp Gorgonzola. Place tortillas on baking sheet and bake on center rack 10-12 minutes, until cheese starts to melt and prosciutto becomes crisp. Remove and garnish with chives; cut in wedges.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 262, Protein 8g, Fat 7g, Calories From Fat 22%, Cholesterol 19mg, Carbohydrates 47g, Fiber 8g, Sodium 411mg.

Mediterranean Fig Kebabs On Mixed Greens

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

Source: Valley Fig Growers

Fig Kebabs

12 medium size fresh figs

1 (1 $\frac{1}{4}$ lbs) medium eggplant

$\frac{1}{2}$ medium red onion

1 medium red bell pepper

Sherry Marinade

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry sherry

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup water

1 Tbsp orange juice concentrate

1 Tbsp soy sauce

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

Citrus Dressing

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsps olive oil

1 Tbsp lemon juice

2 tsps orange juice concentrate

1 tsp thyme leaves

Salad

8 cups mixed lettuce

2 ounces crumbled feta cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped, toasted, pistachios

In small saucepan, combine figs and marinade ingredients. Cover and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 1 minute. Remove from heat and cool for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, cut eggplant lengthwise into quarters. Slice one quarter crosswise into thin wedges, about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick. Cut pepper and onion into 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch squares. Remove figs with slotted spoon, reserving marinade and two figs. For kebabs, alternate eggplant, onion, pepper and figs on skewers. Set aside and prepare dressing.

Dice the two reserved figs and combine with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup reserved marinade; add to Citrus Dressing.

Grill or broil kebabs 5 inches from heat source, brushing with remaining marinade and turning every 3 minutes. Grill for 6 to 10 minutes or until eggplant is soft.

Toss lettuce with remaining dressing; place on 4 plates. Sprinkle with cheese and nuts then top with kebabs.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 345, Protein 10g, Fat 12g, Calories From Fat 29%, Cholesterol 8mg, Carbohydrates 51g, Fiber 13g, Sodium 309mg.

Rosemary Chicken With Fig-Orange Sauce

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals

Source: Valley Fig Growers

1 8-oz package dried figs

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice

4 (3 oz each) boneless, skinless chicken breast halves

2 Tbsps honey

2 Tbsps Dijon mustard

4 (1 oz total) thin slices prosciutto or ham

1 Tbsp butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chicken broth

1 tsp cornstarch

1 tsp grated orange peel

1 Tbsp chopped fresh rosemary or 2 tsps dried

Cut stems from figs and cut into quarters. Place figs and orange juice in a small microwave-safe bowl. Cover and microwave on high 1 minute. Set aside. Place each chicken breast between 2 sheets of plastic wrap and pound until thin. Combine honey and mustard. Spread 2-3 tsps on each chicken breast; top with one slice of prosciutto. Place about six fig pieces in center of chicken. Reserve orange juice and remaining figs. Fold in sides and ends of breast; secure with toothpick. In skillet over medium high heat, melt butter. Add chicken and cook 4 minutes on each side. Combine broth, cornstarch, orange peel and rosemary with reserved orange juice and figs; pour over chicken. Cook covered 2-3 minutes until sauce is slightly thickened. Remove toothpicks and serve.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 370, Protein 31g, Fat 6g, Calories From Fat 14%, Cholesterol 80mg, Carbohydrates 51g, Fiber 7g, Sodium 425mg.